PREFACE

This book offers a thematic study of the idea of refinement as the centra! premise in the Jamesian ethic. Refinement as an organic factor in the development of James's art has received the exhaustive critical attention it deserves, but its importance in James's moral sensibility has not been adequately stressed. The present study hopes to make a modest contribution in this direction by investigating the dramatic relationship between refinement and selfhood in the novels of Henry James as it develops through the four major movements of his artistic creation. The problem is viewed in terms of the growth and education of the Jamesian individual whose quest for a meaningful selfhood becomes identified with the analogous quest for the refinements of life. The metamcrphic cycle of individual growth is traced in terms of its archetypal patterns : the quest, th* ordeal, the crisis and fulfilment.

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